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SHĀH WALĪ ALLĀH OF DELHI'S
HUJJAT ALLĀH AL-BĀLIGHA:
TENSION BETWEEN THE UNIVERSAL
AND THE PARTICULAR IN AN
EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY ISLAMIC THEORY
OF RELIGIOUS REVELATION

Sunni Islamic intellectual history may be viewed as a cycle of fragmentation and diversification followed by attempts to reintegrate and synthesize trends in community opinion. One may more readily understand against this background the role of the traditional renewer, or mujaddid, who is supposed to appear in every century to renew the religion, with this renewal being variously interpreted as reviving adherence to the basic truths, smoothing the tensions among various factions, or synthesizing divergent tendencies for the reconsolidation of the community and the revitalization of the tradition. Perhaps the most well-known renewer has been al-Ghazālī (d. 1111), who is noted for his efforts to reconcile the Sufi mystical goal of religious experience with ritualistic and legalistic elements of formal Islam. The subject of the present paper, Shāh Walī Allāh of Delhi (d. 1762), has on occasion been termed the “Ghazālī” of Islam in the Indian subcontinent. The reason for this epithet is in part his mastery of a wide range of Islamic intellectual disciplines, including Law, Theology, and philosophical and experiential Sufism. Shāh Walī Allāh resembles al-Ghazālī not only on this account, but also, more significantly, in the way in which he used his wide knowledge in an attempt to reconcile the tensions which he felt were tearing Islam in India apart.

Shāh Walī Allāh was born in 1703 near Delhi, the son of a family noted for intellectual and mystical achievement. A few years after his birth the last powerful Mughal ruler, Aurangzeb, died, and this began a decline and disintegration of Muslim power in India. Shāh Walī Allāh was initially trained in the Islamic intellectual disciplines and Sufism by his father, Shāh 'Abd al-Raḥīm.⁽¹⁾ He then took over his father's position as a scholar-teacher of Islam and as a spiritual leader of the Naqshbandi Sufi order. During the years 1731-1732 Shāh Walī Allāh performed the pilgrimage and remained in Mecca and Medina where he mastered Arabic and became deeply involved in the study of hadith, the reports of the sayings and actions of Prophet Muhammad. The study of hadith and the derivation of Islamic rulings from them became one of the major themes of his later work and thus he is representative of a trend in the eighteenth-century Islamic world to encourage the study of the prophetic traditions as the basis for revitalizing Islamic unity, faith, and practice.⁽²⁾

Once back in India, Shāh Walī Allāh became acutely aware of the fragmentation, both politically and intellectually, of Muslims. He therefore made his life's mission one of reconciling these opposing viewpoints. In his works, he noted with concern the trend toward balkanization of the Islamic intellectual disciplines by groups which recognized only their own particular interpretative tools; whether the rational speculation (*burhān*) of the Hellenized Islamic philosophers, the recorded traditions (*sam'*) of the Theologians, or the intuitive realization (*wijdān*) of the mystics.⁽³⁾ In contrast to these fragmented approaches, Shāh Walī Allāh initiated a new methodology which he termed *taṭbīq*, a word derived from the root ṭ-b-q meaning to bring into alignment or to make congruent. This *taṭbīq* methodology is essentially a comparative approach to the various views on any subject which aims to resolve those differences which exist at the surface level and are magnified by superficial misunderstandings arising from limited perspectives. Shāh Walī Allāh's *taṭbīq* method consists of looking beyond the

(1) Shāh Walī Allāh, *Al-Juz' al-Laṭīf*, translated with the Persian text by Husain M. Hidayat, *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal* 14 (1912): 161-175.

(2) Voll, John, "Hadith Scholars and Tariqahs: An Ulema Group," *Journal of Asian and African Studies* 15 (July-October 1980): 262-267.

(3) Walī Allāh, *al-Tafhīmāt al-Ilāhiyya* 1: 110-111 (no. 33).

surface features to the inner essence, the universal concept, or the comprehensive principle (*al-ra'ī al-kullī*), so that a basis for agreement and reconciliation may be established.

This goal or method of *taṭbīq* is not stated overtly in his most well-known work, *Hujjat Allāh al-Bāligha*, (The Conclusive Proof of God), which is a book that sets forth the author's project of revitalizing Islam through the study of the *hadith*. Its method is, however, implicit in the design and argument of the *Hujjat*. This work is comparable, in many ways, to al-Ghazālī's effort to explain and justify ritualistic aspects of Islam according to insights obtained through the mystical experience of the Sufis. Al-Ghazālī's mode of reconciliation had essentially consisted of asserting that the particular ritual practices of Islam had to be performed since they were automatically effective on an individual's spiritual condition due to their connection with a higher realm of existence which Ghazālī associated with the angelic or symbolic plane of *Malakūt*, also known as the World of Images (*'Ālam al-Mithāl*).⁽⁴⁾ Shāh Walī Allāh's theory of religion as expounded in the *Hujjat Allāh* goes into a more detailed and logically structured exposition of how religious practices and laws are effective due to the role of such legislation in naturally promoting the best interests of the development of the human species. At the same time, he maintains the position that those religious rulings based on the interests of the human species achieve their effectiveness due to correlations with higher order symbols enshrined in a spiritual realm, as in Ghazālī's theory. In a further development, the theoretical underpinnings for much of Walī Allāh's model derive from the Neo-Platonic cosmology of the descent of the Divine One into multiplicity through a process of emanation closely following the schema presented by the thirteenth century mystic, Ibn 'Arabī, whose thought had permeated Indian Sufism since the fourteenth century.

Shāh Walī Allāh in the *Hujjat Allāh* attempts to reconcile the Qur'ānic outlook of moral choice in a world where a real dichotomy exists between good and evil, and the monistic view of the Hellenized philosophers and Sufis. These two disparate metaphysical orientations come together in Shāh Walī Allāh's portrayal of the internal dynamics within spheres

(4) Wensinck, A. J., *La Pensée de Ghazzali*, Paris, 1940, p. 88-90.

or levels of experience. From Shāh Walī Allāh's works it is apparent that he analyzes all dimensions of human experience according to a schema of levels of being, for example his theory that human society develops through a series of social stages of increasing complexity and refinement (*irtifāqāt*). Here, as in his theory of the interaction among components of an individual person, or his discussion of the situation of nations to which religions are revealed; Shāh Walī Allāh depicts the internal dynamic within these systems as one of levels or stages composed of parts in conflict. This conflict must be resolved or harmonized toward a higher purpose through achieving or restoring harmony and balance within the system. Once balance is achieved the inherent perfection of the ideal form implicit in the person, species, society, and so on, is fulfilled, and this leads to the entire form or system expanding or moving up to a new, higher, order.

Thus Shāh Walī Allāh's theory of these systems is simultaneously one of a conflict of forces, whether two or many; and of one great force which is a drive inherent in God's creation toward attaining its greatest perfection or the highest salutary purpose (*maṣlaḥa kulliyya*). This one great purpose of the entire universe of progress through attaining harmony makes conflict intelligible and gives overcoming it a religious significance.

In the light of this theory of systems, Shāh Walī Allāh conceives of religion as an element in the universe which is in a very special relationship with the idealized form of the entire human species toward which each individual member of the species is striving as part of the guiding purpose (*maṣlaḥa kulliyya*) of the entire universe. As human systems, whether physical, moral or social, progress further towards this goal, religion is the factor which is administered to the system (the analogy is one of a doctor [God] giving medicine [religions] to his patients). This additional component is designed to be just that elixir which will assist the system in achieving its balance or harmony so that it may progress further.

We see the influence of Islamic mystical thought in Shāh Walī Allāh's theory that each particular religious revelation has its origin in a primordial archetypal religion known as the dīn. This ideal form of religion exists at a higher level in the World of Images which is an archetypal realm roughly

corresponding to the location of the Platonic forms.⁽⁵⁾ This ideal form of the *dīn* is the one in harmony with the corresponding ideal form of the human species, which Shāh Walī Allāh designates by the term "*fiṭra*" (inherent nature). Actualized manifestations of the ideal form of religion known as *millat* (sing. *milla*—religious community, formal religion) descend in successive revelations depending on the particular material and historical circumstances of the people to whom they were sent.⁽⁶⁾ Each succeeding revelation "re-forms" the elements previously found into a new gestalt which embodies the primordial ideal religion (*dīn*) in an altered form suitable to those who receive it. As these human systems have developed throughout history, religion has adapted in its form, beliefs, and spiritual practices to the customs, previous faiths, and temperaments of the nations to which it has been revealed.⁽⁷⁾ Shāh Walī Allāh's theory thus envisions an interaction between the human material and the actualized form (*milla*) of the ideal religion which responds to it and shapes it; in that the more developed and complex the human system, the higher the religious form which it requires to achieve its ideal balance.

Here it is also interesting to note further ideas of Shāh Walī Allāh concerning the relationship between a particular community and its religion. These however reflect a more liberal interpretation on his part of the implications of this theory and are found in one of his mystical works, *al-Tafhīmāt al-Ilāhiyya*, not in the *Hujjat Allāh*. Shāh Walī Allāh writes in this work that disliking the slaughter of animals and believing in the eternity of the world is part of the innate constitution or temperament with which the Hindus are endowed. On the other hand, allowing the slaughter of animals and believing

(5) See, for example, Ibn 'Arabi, *Bezels of Wisdom*, trans. R. Austin, p. 17, for a similar theory of successive prophecy based on an archetypal model. "Every Prophet, from Adam until the last of the prophets, derives what he has from the Seal of Prophets, even though he comes last in his temporal, physical manifestation; for in his essential reality he has always existed."

(6) This distinction between "*dīn*" and "*milla*" is Qur'anic and has been semantically analysed by Toshihiko Izutsu as one between "*dīn*" as a more personal, existential concept of faith and belief and "*milla*" connoting something rigid, objective, and formal which reminds us always of a society based on a common religion." *God and Man in the Qur'ān*. (New York: Reprint Books for Libraries; 1980), pp. 219-220.

(7) *Hujjat Allah* 1: 187.

in the creation of the world in time is consistent with the innate constitution with which the Semites and Persians are endowed⁽⁸⁾ In the same discourse Walī Allāh notes that some differences in beliefs are due to differences in the innate temperaments and material conditions of nations, but are to be considered basically extrinsic to religious revelation, and therefore the prophetic messages did not discuss them. Examples of this which he cites are: the belief in the eternity of the world, reincarnation, the issue of God's changing and renewing attributes and His temporal attributes such as seeing, descending, the self-renewing will, and so on.⁽⁹⁾

The implications of such statements for resolving some controversies among Islamic groups and providing a tolerance of divergent beliefs even outside of the Islamic tradition are quite apparent. This passage, however, cannot be viewed in isolation from Shāh Walī Allāh's arguments for the superiority and finality of the Islamic revelation.

The universalistic implications of this naturalistic and developmental theory of religious revelation are consistent with one aspect of Shāh Walī Allāh's purpose in writing the *Hujjat Allāh*, that of putting the faith of Islam on a strong basis by explaining that there are salutary purposes (*maṣāliḥ*) underlying religions legislation which are based on the ideal constitution of the human species. However, his contention that recognizing these salutary purposes is not sufficient for deciding the validity of legislation, and his arguments for the final and immutable nature of the specific Islamic rulings, introduce an element of tension into his thought. This arises due to the difficulty of asserting the ultimate validity of particular rulings embodied in Islamic Law (*Sharī'a*) while striving to explain these as emerging from an ideal universal form (*dīn*). Three broad areas of tension which occur in Shāh Walī Allāh's exposition will be discussed here:

1. The tension between those rulings incorporated in a prophetic revelation which are based on universal human

(8) Walī Allāh, *Al-Taḥfīmāt* 1: 92 (no. 28).

(9) *Ibid.* It should also be noted that Shāh Walī Allāh does not consistently maintain this tolerant attitude. For example, in *Al-Taḥfīmāt* 2: 222-225 (no. 219) he contrasts Hardwar (a Hindu place of pilgrimage) with Mecca, stating that the former is false and evil for all people due to its association with polytheistic rites.

requirements and those rulings which may be based on accidental historical factors.

2. The problem of affirming that Islam is the final, universal revelation while asserting that it was appropriate for the specific historical situation and temperament of the Arabs to whom it was first revealed.
3. The problem of explaining how spiritual influences operate through each of two branches of religious legislation which Walī Allāh's theory posits:
 - a. the branch based on the universal interests (*maṣāliḥ*) of the human species as embodied in its ideal natural constitution (*fiṭra*) and
 - b. those systems of laws (*sharī'as*) revealed in response to particular historical circumstances not initially encompassed in the requirements of the human constitution.

Having posited this relativistic and progressive model of religious revelation, Shāh Walī Allāh has to develop his explanation of the specific nature of Islamic legislation and ritual practice within this framework. He observes that the purpose of specific rulings in any religion involves making that religion endure and giving higher truths a concrete embodiment among a community of people. How then, are these specific rules to be derived? According to Shāh Walī Allāh there is, suited to the basic nature of ideal constitution (*fiṭra*) of all human beings a sort of common religious substratum known as the *madhhab ṭabī'ī*. Of this natural way or path Shāh Allāh writes, "This is like the natural belief for human beings which the specific form (*ṣūra nau'iyya*) provides, and the sects of the nations are equal in (observing) it".⁽¹⁰⁾ Examples of this "natural way" are common human customs such as disposing of the dead in an honorable way, condemning despicable actions, and so on. With this in mind, Shāh Walī Allāh cautions that the founder-leader (*imām*) of a religion should keep his acts of legislation as close as possible to the natural belief (*madhhab ṭabī'ī*) of mankind so that they may be promulgated with the minimum of conflict.⁽¹¹⁾

(10) *Hujjat Allāh* 1: 204.

(11) *Ibid.* 1: 248.

As human history unfolds, however, one is forced to acknowledge the differences which appear among nations both in temperament and historical heritage, and hence the need for variety arises in religious legislation due to these temperamental and historical factors. Hence, Walī Allāh explains how the specific rulings of a religion are instituted by a prophet on the basis of several factors.

One of these factors is the desirability of preserving among a people those aspects of previous traditions remaining among them which still operate for their benefit, as our author notes, "It is a principle of a successful prophetic mission that no previous custom which was good will be removed."⁽¹²⁾ Secondly, it is often necessary to incorporate new legislation necessary for the further development of a nation's condition which recognizes that changes have occurred among its people since the previous revelation. Shāh Walī Allāh also notes that there is a third category of contingent, accidental factors in legislation which arise due to demands on the prophet to give rulings in the context of particular situations and to answer questions at specific times. It is here that the first tension between the particular and the universal aspects appears in Shāh Walī Allāh's theory. After explaining that some incidental rulings of a prophet may become enshrined at a higher level because at certain times a spiritual force operates which effects such a transformation, he observes that Prophet Muhammad therefore discouraged specific questions of this type.⁽¹³⁾ This leads to a tension in his theory since the issue is raised that perhaps some of these specific rulings weren't really necessary initially but became necessary once Prophet Muhammad articulated them in response to questioning. This then leads to the acknowledgment of a certain arbitrariness of some aspects of religious legislation which must nevertheless be obeyed.

A second area where tension is evident in Shāh Walī Allāh's discussion is his description of Islam as final and universal. One reason given for the finality of Islam was that it completed the development of human social forms by providing for the highest form of social organization, the Caliphate.⁽¹⁴⁾

(12) *Ibid.* 1: 191.

(13) *Ibid.* 1: 193.

(14) *Ibid.* 1: 258-259.

More problematic is Walī Allāh's assertion that one reason for the universality of Islam is that in this religion specific factors were kept to a minimum through the elimination of unnecessary customs so that the faith would be able to spread as widely as possible. ⁽¹⁵⁾ On the basis of this argument one may question whether the Arabs, to whom Islam was first revealed, did not thus receive a message which was not tailored to their individual needs in the way in which revelations sent to previous communities had been.

A major and important portion of his discussion concerning the finality of Islam and its legislation elaborates on the structure of the Islamic laws. Here Shāh Walī Allāh distinguishes between two branches of religious sciences:

- 1) Those related to the natural benefits or interests (*maṣāliḥ*) of the human race and which are based on the innate constitution of man (*fiṭra*).
- 2) Those related to the specific religious systems of law (*sharī'as*) which are expressed as rules and duties.

According to Shāh Walī Allāh, one who wishes to be well-versed in the religious sciences has to understand that man is required to carry out religious obligations on the basis of either or both of these branches. In this context Shāh Walī Allāh presents his analysis of how religious symbols work.

The concept of "religious symbol" is expressed in Shāh Walī Allāh's thought by the term "*maẓinna*"; plural "*maẓānn*, or *maẓinnā*". *Maẓinna* is derived from the Arabic root *ẓ-n-n* meaning "to think", "to believe"; hence a *maẓinna* is "a place where something is expected or thought to be, a supposed location or instantiation", or "a mark or indication for something". The symbols (*maẓānn*) for the religious acts were set in pre-eternity to be the most suitable for the nature of every people. These symbols have a very special relationship to their referents, for they are not only models

(15) *Ibid.* 1: 248. The *Hujjat* was largely for orthodox consumption, so that this is as far as Walī Allāh discusses the finality of religious forms. However, in his more mystical work, the *Tafhīmāt*, he presents the concept that development in religious understanding continues, not prophetic revelation—but further possibilities for individual spiritual development. The principal bearers of this further development are, first, Ibn 'Arabi, and finally, Shāh Walī Allāh himself. *Al-Tafhīmāt* 1: 166-168 # 68.

of them, standing for them, but they come to have an identical spiritual value and effectiveness insofar as the requital of God is concerned, and insofar as their psychological and spiritual effect on the humans practicing that religion is concerned. The relationship of the *māzinna* to the principle for which it stands is compared by Shāh Walī Allāh to that of the word to its referent, or the mental image to the reality which is thought about. ⁽¹⁶⁾

Then when God opened this knowledge to the Highest Host and revealed to them that the symbols (*maẓānn*) would stand in the position of the principles, and that they were their embodiments and representations, and that religious obligations could not be imposed on a nation except through them (the symbols); a certain determination (*ijmā'*) was obtained in the Realm of the Holy that they (the symbols) were like a word in relation to the reality which is its referent, and like the intellected image in relation to the external reality from which it is extracted. ⁽¹⁷⁾

It is in Shāh Walī Allāh's concept of *māzinna* that we find the basis of his theory of change and variation in religious rulings. While the relationship of the symbol to its referent is fixed within any one context, it is possible that just as there are different languages, there may be different sets of *maẓānn*, each corresponding to a successive revelation of the one true dīn. According to this theory of change, the symbols for the best interests (*maṣāliḥ*) of the human race will vary with the in ages and customs. ⁽¹⁸⁾ For this reason religious laws vary from nation to nation and the abrogation of one message or ruling by another may take place.

Examples of such abrogations are given, such as the varying of symbols or their expected locations within the Islamic tradition during the lifetime of the Prophet due to changes in material circumstances. For example, the rules of inheritance were changed when the first Muslims emigrated to Medina,

(16) *Hujjat Allāh* 1: 194.

(17) *Ibid.* The Highest Host in Shāh Walī Allāh's cosmology are angels who communicate God's will to the world. The Holy Enclave (Ḥaẓirat al-Quds) are the highest angels and souls of great beings who participate in the process of assisting the humans species.

(18) *Ibid.* 1: 187.

then when they resumed power in Mekka, the laws were changed to keep inheritance within the family. Another ruling where the *mazīnna* changed concerned a prohibition on making a date beverage in vessels other than water skins, as this would lead to fermentation. Later the prohibition was applied directly to the drinking of alcohol. The reason given for this change in the *mazīnna* of the ruling was that by the time of the second, more comprehensive and clear prohibition, the Muslims had become firm in their faith and able to obey the rule.⁽¹⁹⁾ This form of change within Islam is known as the abrogation (*naskh*) of a ruling by a subsequent one. Other factors in the variation of religious rulings were changes in particular historical circumstances. For example, Jacob had imposed on himself certain dietary restrictions as the result of a vow to God, and these were made incumbent on the Jews. The Muslims, however, did not have to follow the same rules since these historical circumstances were not considered part of the heritage of the Arabs.⁽²⁰⁾

According to Shāh Walī Allāh, when a prophet comes with a new message he corrects the results of distortion and carelessness in the previous tradition. He must also consider the relationship of the symbols to the time in which they had been revealed.

Therefore, those rulings which are conditional upon the symbols for the salutary purposes (*maẓānn al-maṣāliḥ*) of that time, and then those symbols come to vary due to variations in customs—he (the prophet) changes, since the essential goal in the legislation of rules is the best interests of mankind (*maṣāliḥ*), and these are indicated by the symbols (*maẓānn*). Sometimes a thing is a symbol for a salutary purpose, then it ceases to be such a symbol for it ... and it is possible that a symbol or locus (*mazīnna*) for certain things will cease to be effective so that the rules must change in accordance with this.⁽²¹⁾

The *maẓānn* or religious symbols which are embodied in religious legislation are instantiations of higher values and connected with higher realities, in much the same way as

(19) *Ibid.* 1 : 260-262.

(20) *Ibid.* 1: 186.

(21) *Ibid.* 1 : 257.

al-Ghazālī suggested in his theory of the spiritual dimensions of religious obligations. Some of these *maẓānn* may be considered natural symbols, as they are derived through the branch of rulings based on the *maṣāliḥ* (those things which are in accordance with the nature (*fiṭra*) and purpose of the human race). Violating rules connected with such *maẓānn* may be understood to lead to some sort of natural punishment or damage for a person even if no religious law had been revealed explicitly requiring them. In the case of the religious laws (*sharī'as*) connected with specific historical contexts; the religious symbols embodied in their rulings are derived from particular and temporal contexts. These come to have a general validity at a higher spiritual level and from there come to affect the form of the human species which exists from pre-eternity in the archetypal plane of the World of Images. Thus the symbols derived from the *sharī'a* branch of legislation become "naturalized" so that being required on the basis of them is natural, as well as being based on legislated decrees. (*) Some of these religious laws and symbols may be explained, or understood through reason while others are not rationally comprehensible, and thus textual sources are required in order to know of them. This conclusion reinforces Shāh Walī Allāh's argument for the importance of the study of the hadith or sayings of the Prophet, an argument for which the entire first volume of the *Ḥujjat Allāh* is a prelude.

Here again a tension is evident in Shāh Walī Allāh's thought between universality and particularity. While the first category of religious symbols, the *maẓānn* which embody the *maṣāliḥ* or beneficial interests of humanity, are recognized as based on the form of the human species based in a higher spiritual realm, the second category of the particular rules of the revealed Islamic *sharī'a*, generated by particular historical circumstances or incidents, can only be allowed to carry the same force by allowing them a special power to reach this higher level. Such a transformation occurs by negating time, so that these special events may act on the pre-eternal form of the human species altering it so that they become embodied in its ultimate destiny. The effect of obeying the rules generated by these particular circumstancest thus becomes

(*) See diagram on the following page.

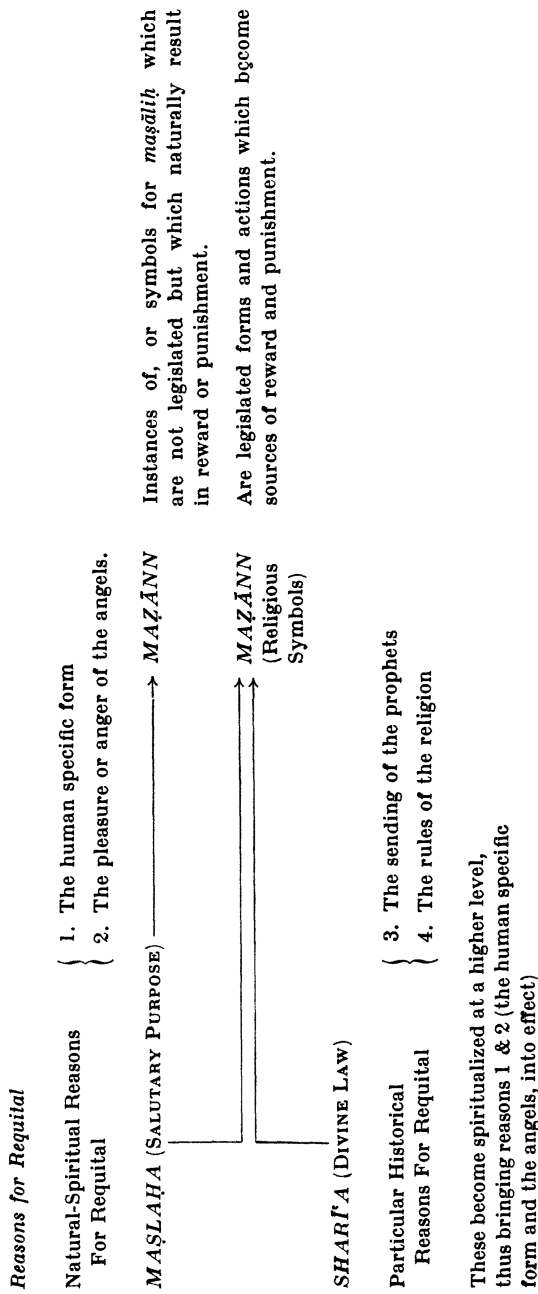


Fig. 1. — The Relationships Between the Salutary Purposes (*maṣāliḥ*), The Divine Law (*sharīʿa*) and Their Symbols or Instantiations (*maẓānn*).

'naturalized'. This type of reasoning is not at all foreign to the tradition of Sufi mysticism, for according to Sufi beliefs, special forces, such as the concentrated zeal (*himma*) of saints can act on the archetypal forms or decrees in the World of Images and thus turn back or alter what had been decreed from pre-eternity.

It should be noted that the importance of Shāh Walī Allāh's thought as expounded in the *Hujjat Allah*, lies in attempting to synthesize competing intellectual traditions within Islam, in particular emanationist mysticism and the "legalistic" orientation of Sunni Islam.⁽²²⁾ His purpose, in this and other works, was to reconcile the internal disputes of the Muslim community and to put the *sharī'a* on firm foundations agreed upon by all. This dual orientation gives to his thought a certain tension between flexible, inclusive views and very firm, inflexible stances regarding the specific rulings of the Qur'ān and the sunna. It is clear that Shāh Walī Allāh stressed adherence to the *sharī'a* as being necessary for the practical cohesion of a community under enormous stress from internal, and in the Indian context, external, factors. Some aspects of his thought appear reformist and even puritanical, and on numerous occasion he spoke out against what he considered distortions in Islam whether these arose from the extravagances of the Sufis, the hair-splitting of the theologians and the philosophers, or the blind imitation to tradition of some of the legal scholars.⁽²³⁾

One cannot ignore, however, the Sufi elements of his thought, which sound a mystical and optimistic note. This Sufi inspiration behind much of his thought is also a source of tension since the belief in an individual mystical path under the supervision of a personal spiritual guide has always needed to be reconciled with the vision of Islam practiced by a community which follows a certain common set of rules. In his work, *al-Budūr al-Bāzigha*, Shāh Walī Allāh goes so far as to suggest his concept of what an "ultimate religion" (*al-milla al-quṣwā*) might be. Here the modes of religious practice, whether social, involving rituals, or legislation, would

(22) This aspect of his thought has been noted in Rahman, "The Thinker in Crisis-Shāh Walīy-Ullāh" p. 45 where Shāh Walī Allāh's role as a mediator is compared to that of Al-Ash'arī and Al-Ghazālī.

(23) *Al-Tafhīmāt* 2: 288-293 (no. 246).

all be individualized according to the capacity of each person, while remaning ideal and universal. Walī Allāh notes, however, that this "ultimate religion" is impossible and hypothetical for several reasons, among them that humans are not perfect enough to receive or transmit it. ⁽²⁴⁾

In conclusion, while Shāh Walī Allāh has attempted to integrate the perspectives of emanationist mysticism and orthodox Islam at a metaphysical level, tensions appear in his thought at the level of evaluating and preactically applying the Islamic rulings; since these are treated as immutable, in contrast to his vision of the possibility of change and further development in other spheres. Thus his theory of *taṭbīq*, or reconciliation of diverse elements, is used in its sense of allowing flexibility within the established tradition, but is not directed toward the problem of integrating or adapting to new elements.

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(24) *Al-Budūr*, pp. 244-248.

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